3: Krige E-5 (1928-1938)1938 FX14 Lovedu FX14

marriage. Where the chief is a woman, her own son or daughter succeeds. The Lobedu now have a distinct preference for women rulers; the last three chiefs have been women, and the present queen succeeded in preference to her elder uterine brother. It would seem that the fashion was set by the Lobedu, for tribal genealogies show no women chiefs in the Lowveld prior to the accession of Modjadji I. Shortly after that we have the appearance of the first queen in the Khaha and Mamaila tribes, followed later by Letswalo and Mahlo. Lowveld tribes are no exception to the general tendency among Bantu for succession to the throne to be accompanied by trouble and bloodshed. They have, however, an interesting method of submitting the case of various claimants to the decision of the powers that be by the ordeal of trying the door. All claimants to the throne are brought to the closed door of the hut in which the old chief died. One by one, they step forward shouting their own name and ancestry to try the door which, while resisting all efforts of other claimants, flies open at the touch of the rightful heir.[1]

The Lowveld chief is assisted and advised in the government of his country by his relatives,[2] generally known as *bakhomana*. There are no formal councils, as among Tswana, and it is even doubtful whether the *pitjo* or meeting of all adult men in the tribe ever had power to make decisions. Certainly to-day it is called only when orders or notices from European authorities have to be transmitted. No one in the Lobedu tribe ever knows what is happening even in important matters affecting them all, and the tribe accepts with equanimity the most outrageous favouritism of the royal family.

The district, bounded by natural features such as streams or depressions down the hill-sides, is generally quite small, varying in extent from about one square mile to five, so that in a country like Modjadji's with an area of some 140 square miles there are about 100 headmen. Aggregations of districts into larger units under subchiefs, such as are found in Zululand, though not unknown, are not

[1] Some one is, of course, inside to hold the door against the wrong claimants and in Modjadji's tribe the chief always has one hut with two doors, said to be for this purpose.

[2] The *rangwa* (father's brother) or *rakhadi* (father's sister) are often important advisers or, especially where a woman is ruling, the *malome* (mother's brother).

3: Krige E-5 (1928-1938)1938 FX14 Lovedu FX14

634 characteristic of Lowveld political organization. Districts are still of
624 great importance, and the district head is a busy and important man, both socially and politically. Contact with the European has resulted in two diverse tendencies observable in our area: among small tribes,
634 such as Phalaborwa and Sekhopo's Lobedu, there has been increased
624 centralization, the chief taking over functions, such as allocation of
178 land, which used to be the province of headmen; elsewhere, especially in the large kingdom of Modjadji, district headmen are in many respects becoming more independent, exacting from underlings labour to which they are not entitled and even controlling other districts to which they have no right.

624 Women may here, as among Venda, be heads of districts,[1] and, though the proportion of women to men is never high, they are often
562 the most important district heads in the tribe. Women become headmen in a variety of ways: among Lobedu a woman of the royal family may be appointed head of an area (generally, nowadays, over newly-bought tribal land) and though in practice her husband may do most of the work, she it is who is recognized and approached in the last resort. A daughter of the chief house succeeds her father even if there are sons of other houses; a woman may succeed her husband when the children are too young, and though, strictly speaking, she is only a regent in this case, she often continues to rule until her death and long after her son has attained his majority. Or a *rakhadi* may be asked to act as regent for her nephew, in which case she very often secures the succession for her own son, ousting the rightful heir.

695 Law and Justice. The Lowveld was the land of the ordeal, the only method by which witchcraft could be discovered or difficult cases of theft and adultery, where evidence was inconclusive, be decided. Boiling medicated water which scalded only the hands of the guilty might be used or a concoction be drunk which intoxicated the culprit, leaving the innocent unaffected. Except for occasional use among the Phalaborwa, however, the ordeal has been completely ousted by the Shangana–Tonga smeller-out and a modern method of dealing with witchcraft has developed over the whole of the Lowveld, which has spread not only into Vendaland but also into portions of the

[1] Except among Phalaborwa, Tsubye, and the people of Tswale and Sekhopo.